

professors but shunned as anathema by the modern Court.

And this courage flamed again in 2009 in Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One v. Holder when Justice Thomas was the first Member of the Court to reach the conclusion that section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is no longer constitutionally sustainable as a countermeasure for a historical pattern of voter discrimination and disenfranchisement in the covered States.

Many of us (including me) will not agree with every position Justice Thomas has espoused in his opinions. But all of us, I believe, should recognize and respect the conviction with which he approaches his duties on the Court and the boldness and courage he has consistently exhibited in voicing his convictions.

We live in times today when the courage of conviction is in short supply among our leaders but is most needed by our Nation. We are therefore blessed, indeed, that courage and conviction have full expression on the Supreme Court of the United States through the voice of Justice Thomas.

Thank you, Senator Hatch, for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the important contributions of Justice Thomas to our Nation and to the Supreme Court on the historic 25th anniversary of his appointment as Associate Justice.

Respectfully submitted,

STEVEN GILL BRADBURY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### LOUISIANA FLOODS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise again today to bring attention to the devastating floods in my State of Louisiana, which are now being called the Great Flood of 2016. In a matter of a few days, 7.1 million gallons of rain fell on Louisiana—more than fell during Hurricane Katrina. The flooding that resulted caused \$3.7 billion in damages to homes and businesses.

A flood event of this magnitude is such a low probability that it is called a thousand-year flood. To put this in perspective—just statistically—the last time a flood of this magnitude would have occurred in this area would have been 500 years before Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas.

It is hard to comprehend, but this chart may help. We all know of the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy and of Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005. This is from the 1871 Chicago fire. This is the fifth largest disaster after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. In the last 100 years, the 2016 Louisiana flood is the third largest disaster in American history.

The National Hurricane Center was not able to warn us for this. They said that rain is going to start. It started to rain, and the next day there was flooding. Most folks who were flooded had never been flooded before. They were living in areas that they were told were not at risk for flooding.

The first parishes did not have time to evacuate or to prepare. Here you can see a family being helped out by volunteers. In the back, you see what is called a high-water vehicle. It doesn't flood out, but it is a single vehicle.

There were as many as 30,000 folks evacuated from their homes by what was called the "Cajun Navy"—Americans helping Americans get out.

By the way, this is a residential street. This is a neighborhood in which you can see the street itself flooded. This family's belongings are now piled up on the side of a road. They escaped with the bags they hold. This is one family. So far, 144,000 people have applied for individual assistance through FEMA.

I suggest that these people need to know their fellow Americans care about them. Just as important for communities, small businesses were hit too. According to the local newspaper, 12,000 small businesses in the area flooded have been out of commission because of the flood. This is from Denham Springs. It is a town right across the Amite River from East Baton Rouge Parish. You see everything they are selling piled up on the side of the road. Of course, this is tragic for the business, but think about the community. The National Flood Insurance Program estimates that 40 percent of small businesses that flood never recover and never go back into business.

This is tragic not just for the business owner but also for the people whom she employs because you have just destroyed the job and the opportunity for everyone whom she does employ.

It is one thing to look at statistics and to look at the huge scope of this disaster, but I return to the fact that it is a disaster affecting individuals and affecting families—people who have lost everything. When I say "everything"—they still have their life, but the floodwaters have now receded. You would say: Wait, how can floodwaters have receded if we still have a home under which there is obviously a lot of water?

This flood was so devastating. There is a community called Cypress Point in the French Settlement. The homes were built far above the base flood elevation. They were told they were not at risk of flooding. The floodwaters rose, though, to 46 feet above flood level, and they ripped out the ground beneath the homes. What you are looking at used to be ground beneath the home. Now the river has taken away the bank, and these homes are sitting in a river.

Ten of these homes are being condemned, and there is a certain kind of bitterness these folks must feel. First, they didn't think they were going to flood. If they want to come back and put supports under their home, they will have to get an Army Corps of Engineers permit to do that. If their home falls into the river—and it looks like that could happen—they have to pay to remove their home from that river. They are going to be caught coming and going. Again, these homes are built above the base flood elevation.

This is Dorothy Brooks. Dorothy is 78. She is being rescued. She is wheel-

chair-bound. Here is Sergeant Thomas Wheeler of the Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff's Office carrying her out. Dorothy did not have time to get out on her own. You can still see rain falling, even though water is up to about 3 or 4 feet. Many seniors like Dorothy were able to return to their home, but due to their age, they could not rip it out. If your home is flooded to 4 feet, you have to go around and physically take the sheetrock and the insulation out that is behind the carpet and the wood floors. If not, mold comes in.

Here is a tragic example of it. Roy and Vera Rodney are both in their eighties. They had 4 inches of water in their home. The FEMA inspector told them that it was habitable. So they were denied repairs and rental assistance, but they didn't have any family nearby. They couldn't gut their house. They couldn't repair it. So the water-damaged carpet, furniture, and belongings stayed, and, predictably, mold appeared. They could no longer live there. They evacuated. They weren't there to let volunteers in to rip it out. Now they have mold throughout their home, and it is uninhabitable. Because they couldn't get the aid they needed, cost of recovery grew with time.

If there is a metaphor here, it is this. If you are unable to get the aid when needed, the cost of recovery grows with time. Roy and Vera were not required to purchase flood insurance. They lived in zone X. Zone X is thought to be at such low risk of flooding that flood insurance is not required.

By the way, that is a huge factor in flooding. About 80 percent of the homes that were flooded did not have flood insurance—not because they didn't purchase it on purpose when they were told to but because they were told they lived in low-risk areas for flooding where flood insurance was not required.

I will say that is why Federal aid is so critical. We have thousands of families completely caught off guard, unprepared—through no fault of their own—by a freak of nature, a thousand-year flood. They are now struggling to pick up the pieces. They are trying to make the decision: Do I stay and rebuild, or do I just move on? Families, businesses, Louisiana need help. I ask that we pass this funding bill quickly. People are hurting; people need help.

Some look at this picture and just see debris. This may be Youngsville, a community I visited, but it could be any community. I would say that is not debris. That is a wedding dress that was saved for 20 years. It is picture albums, children's toys, clothes to go to work, textbooks, and memorabilia. It is their life, piled up the road.

I am thankful that Senate leadership has put what they are calling a down payment on the continuing resolution. This reassures families that their fellow Americans care and that they can rebuild and prosper, but we are not through yet. Helping each other is a fundamental American value.



I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to support this legislation—to help families faced with losing their homes and losing everything, to help folks pick up the pieces and put their lives back together. To Americans across the country, call your Senator and ask them to support Dorothy, Ray, and Vera.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

#### PRESCRIPTION OPIOID AND HEROIN EPIDEMIC AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, in recognition of Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic Awareness Week, I am here to convey the urgency of responding to this crisis.

We are coming to the point of no return in this national discussion of opioid addiction. Between 2013 and 2015, the United States saw an increase of more than 8,000 percent in the amount of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Wait; it gets worse. The Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory tells my office that from 2013 to 2015, the number of items seized by law enforcement that tested positive for fentanyl increased by 10,000 percent. We are watching as this category 5 hurricane is making landfall. Unless we do something to stop it, we will watch fentanyl lay waste to community after community all across the United States of America. Fentanyl is the Godzilla of opioids. It is stronger, it is deadly, and it is coming to every family in our country unless we do something now.

Between 2013 and 2014, more than 700 deaths in the United States were attributed to fentanyl and its components. That is for the whole country, but according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, as of last month, unintentional opioid overdose deaths in my State since January have skyrocketed. From January to the end of June, there were 488 confirmed cases of fentanyl overdose opioid deaths in my own State alone. There were only 700 deaths in the whole country from fentanyl between 2013 and 2014. Fentanyl has now been confirmed in two-thirds of all of the overdosed deaths in Massachusetts so far this year. It was 57 percent of the deaths last year in 2015 and now it is up to 66 percent of the deaths.

Many drug users overdose on fentanyl because they have no idea it is mixed into whatever substance they are injecting or whatever pills they are swallowing. They do not realize how deadly it is. It also poses a serious threat to the men and women who are first to respond to the scene of an overdose. If the powder is absorbed into the skin or accidentally inhaled, it can be deadly, making our first responders especially vulnerable to the drug's harm-

ful effects. Just last week, 11 members of a SWAT team fell ill after a bust in Connecticut where they encountered deadly fentanyl.

We know Mexico and China are the primary sources of illicit fentanyl and for the chemical building blocks from which it is made and then trafficked into the United States. The business model for those who manufacture and sell fentanyl is simple: fentanyl is cheaper, more potent, and more addictive than heroin.

We must make stopping the trafficking of fentanyl into the United States from Mexico and China one of our highest foreign policy priorities. We must elevate it up to what we are trying to put together as a plan to fight ISIS. We must put it up there with a plan to ensure that we protect our jobs from copyright or trade infringement. We must elevate this importation of fentanyl to the very highest level of foreign policy concern in our country.

I was pleased to see reports of recent cooperation between the United States and China in combating fentanyl trafficking, including a commitment by China to target U.S.-bound exports of substances controlled in the United States and an agreement to increase the exchange of law enforcement and scientific information that can lead to coordinated actions to control substances and chemicals of concern.

We are improving information sharing on heroin and fentanyl between our government and Mexico. Next month, Mexico, Canada, and the United States will meet for a North American drug dialogue and focus on commitments to develop a North American approach to combatting illicit opioids, including fentanyl and its precursor chemicals and analogs, but there is so much more we must do. Fentanyl is an overseas invader of a different kind, but it is equally deadly. We must continue to elevate the fight against fentanyl and make it one of our highest national and international priorities.

I have introduced a Senate resolution calling for cooperation to stop the trafficking of illicit fentanyl from overseas. It is a bipartisan resolution with the support of Senator RUBIO, and I thank my friend Senator SHAHEEN for cosponsoring this legislation as well. Our resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that the U.S. Government and the Governments of Mexico and China have a shared interest in and responsibility for stopping the trafficking of fentanyl into the United States, and all three countries should develop joint actions to attain that goal.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this resolution and to recognize the grave seriousness of the challenge illicit fentanyl poses to our country and to make stopping the trafficking of that drug into the United States a national priority.

Let's be clear. Stopping the over-prescription of opioid pain medication

that is fueling addiction to heroin and fentanyl and countless overdoses starts with the prescribers. We need to require anyone who prescribes opioid pain medication and other controlled substances to undergo mandatory training on safe prescribing practices and the identification of possible substance use disorders. We need to make sure people who enter the judicial system don't arbitrarily have their Medicaid coverage terminated, making it more difficult to access treatment once they are released and thereby fueling the vicious cycle of reincarceration.

We need to make sure all opioids approved by the Food and Drug Administration are first reviewed by independent experts to ensure that those drugs are not only safe and effective but also will not continue to fuel the epidemic of addiction in this country.

We need to make sure prescription drug monitoring programs are fully utilized and nationally interoperable in order to prevent doctor shopping, where one doctor doesn't know another doctor has already prescribed a medication or a person moves from one State to another State with multiple doctors prescribing the same prescription drugs. That must end.

We must let Big Pharma know their army of lobbyists will be matched by an army of advocates who work every day to raise awareness and save lives.

In Boston, there is an area of our city called the Methadone Mile. It is approximately 1 square mile. It is the location of methadone clinics, safety-net hospitals, and homeless shelters. It is also home to those struggling and receiving treatment for addiction and the litany of saints and angels who are providing the desperately needed services for those suffering from mental health and substance abuse disorders. It is a 1 mile, one-stop shop for hope and ground zero in the battle against addiction in Boston.

Here in Washington, we are at the epicenter of the Money Mile. It is both an area where Big Pharma's lobbyists toil with the task of ensuring that even during this storm of prescription drug, heroin, and fentanyl overdose deaths, the deluge of prescriptions for opioid-based painkillers goes unabated. According to a story that came out this week from the Associated Press and Center for Public Integrity, the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$880 million nationwide on lobbying and campaign contributions from 2006 through 2015. That is more than eight times what even the NRA and the gun lobby recorded for activities during that time period. When pitted against the Money Mile, the Methadone Mile doesn't stand a chance. The Money Mile and its army of Big Pharma lobbyists are the reason mandatory prescriber education is not the law. It is the reason the Food and Drug Administration has been complicit in many instances in the worsening of this epidemic. Without real funding for opioid addiction treatment, the Methadone